

Hobbies

Threads among the bills may help to thwart counterfeiters

By Roger Boye

Paper money sporting new anti-counterfeiting devices—under discussion for several years—finally could begin rolling off printing presses by mid-1991.

The enhanced Federal Reserve notes will have microprinting around the center portraits and a clear polyester thread embedded into the paper, small but important additions that are expected to make “greenbacks” more difficult to duplicate accurately on color copying machines.

“There’s a good chance pro-

duction will begin in 1991, possibly early in the second half [of the year],” said Ira M. Polikoff, a spokesman for the U. S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing. “The timing is iffy because we still have no paper contract.”

Most likely, the government will make new \$50 and \$100 notes first and gradually work down to the lower denominations. Freshly printed paper money usually takes several months to reach circulation.

Federal officials had planned to make the additions in 1987, but thread-bearing paper supplied by private industry did not meet

government standards when used at high-speed production levels. More time was needed so that paper companies could develop a satisfactory product.

Information printed on the threads—such as “USA 100” on \$100 notes—will be visible if a bill is held to a light. The new anti-counterfeiting devices augment existing deterrents, such as finely printed portraits and paper containing tiny color fibers.

Experts fear that thousands of otherwise law-abiding Americans will attempt to counterfeit paper money on color copiers as the machines become more widely

available. In several years, color copiers could be as common in the workplace as black-and-white machines are today.

Meanwhile, sometime this month the Bureau of Engraving and Printing is expected to begin producing “greenbacks” at its new satellite plant in Fort Worth, Texas, Polikoff said.

Federal Reserve notes printed in Fort Worth will look just like those made in Washington, except that they will carry a small “FW” in the lower right-hand corner of the front side. Also, the tiny printing plate number on the back side—which is just below the letter “E” in “ONE” on the \$1 bill—will be slightly enlarged on notes from Fort Worth.

The Texas plant was built in part because officials feared that the government would be left with no production capacity if the Washington, D. C., facility

were destroyed by fire or in another disaster. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing never before has operated a paper-money printing plant outside Washington.



Uncle Sam is selling to collectors engraved portraits of President Bush, continuing a portrait program that began more than 100 years ago.

Each portrait costs \$4.50 and is printed on 9-by-12-inch cream-colored card stock with the engraved area measuring 4-by-5 inches. Technicians used a similar engraving procedure to prepare portraits for U. S. currency.

To order, send a check to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Public Sales Program, Room 602-11A, 14th and C Streets, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20228. Allow at least eight weeks for delivery.